



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DECEMBER 10, 2003

CONTACT: U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
MARVIN SMILON, HERBERT HADAD,
MICHAEL KULSTAD
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
(212) 637-2600

CORRECTED VERSION

'CYBERSCAMMER' PLEADS GUILTY TO FEDERAL CHARGES OF USING
DECEPTIVE INTERNET NAMES TO MISLEAD MINORS TO X-RATED SITES

JAMES B. COMEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that JOHN ZUCCARINI, 53, pled guilty today in Manhattan federal court to charges arising from his creation and use of misleading domain names on the Internet to deceive minors into logging on to pornographic Web sites.

According to the 50-Count Information filed today, and a previously-filed criminal Complaint, ZUCCARINI, operating from a hotel in Hollywood, Florida, registered and used misleading domain names on the Internet in order to earn money by directing Internet users to Web sites which advertise for, among other things, pornography. According to the Complaint, the activity allegedly netted ZUCCARINI as much as \$1 million a year.

According to the Information and Complaint, ZUCCARINI

used various Internet registries to register domain names which consist of close misspellings of popular legitimate domain names. For example, ZUCCARINI registered the Internet domain name "WWW.DINSEYLAND.COM," which is a misspelling of "WWW.DISNEYLAND.COM," the legitimate domain name for an amusement park owned and operated by the Walt Disney Corporation. According to the Information and Complaint, ZUCCARINI registered at least 3,000 such misleading domain names.

In addition, according to the Complaint, in many cases, ZUCCARINI registered multiple misspellings of the same legitimate domain name. For example, ZUCCARINI registered 16 misspellings and variations of the legitimate Website "BRITNEYSPEARS.COM," a Website owned and operated by Britney Spears, a popular female singer. According to the Complaint, ZUCCARINI did this in order to ensure that every possible misspelling of that legitimate domain would cause Internet users to access advertising Web sites that pay ZUCCARINI for bringing viewers to their sites.

The Information and Complaint charged that many of the domain names ZUCCARINI registered are misspellings or variations of Web sites associated with entertainers, celebrities and cartoon characters that are popular with young children. For example, ZUCCARINI registered the domain name "WWW.BOBTHEBIULDER.COM" and "WWW.TELTUBBIES.COM" which are, respectively, misspellings of the Web sites for "Bob The Builder" and "Teletubbies," both of which are cartoon characters popular

with young children.

According to the Complaint, investigation by the United States Postal Inspection Service revealed that if a person were to inadvertently access either "WWW.BOBTHEBIULDER.COM" or "WWW.TELTUBBIES.COM," the person would be presented with advertisements for free access to pornography including numerous images of hard-core pornography, such as explicit photographs of young people engaging in sexual intercourse.

Specifically, as described in the Complaint, on May 19 and May 20, 2003, investigators with the United States Postal Inspection Service in New York accessed the ZUCCARINI-controlled variations of the "Bob The Builder," "Britney Spears," "Disneyland," and "Teletubbies" Web sites discussed above. Upon accessing these ZUCCARINI-controlled sites, the investigators computer was automatically directed to a Web page which, according to the domain name which appeared in the computer's browser, was known as "amaturevideos.nl."

Almost immediately thereafter, the investigator's computer was automatically redirected to another Web site; this Web site had the domain name "HANKY-PANKY-COLLEGE.com" (the "Hanky-Panky Site"). Further access of the Hanky-Panky Site by the investigator led to a Web page entitled "Dorm Sex Party." This Web page contained pictures of partially nude young people

engaging in sexual activity. The investigator's attempts to close this page by clicking on the "close" button of his computer screen did not close the page. Rather, it opened additional pages on the Hanky-Panky Site, including a Web page containing a collage comprised of several graphic pornographic pictures. Virtually all of the pornographic images observed by the investigator were advertisements for, among other things, free access to pornography.

The prosecution and guilty plea is the first of its kind to be brought under the Truth in Domain Names Act, which was enacted on April 30, 2003, as part of the "Amber Alert" legislation.

As described in the Complaint, ZUCCARINI's activities in directing Internet users to Web Sites depicting pornography were the subject of numerous consumer complaints, lawsuits by legitimate domain name holders, and an enforcement action by the Federal Trade Commission for unfair and deceptive practices.

In civil lawsuits brought against ZUCCARINI by private citizens whose domain names he has used misleading versions of, ZUCCARINI admitted that one reason why he registered domain names of Web sites popular with children was because children are more likely than adults to make spelling errors and to mistype Web site addresses. In addition, in those civil lawsuits, ZUCCARINI

admitted that he earned between \$.10 and \$.25 for every viewer who he brought to the Web sites which advertised for pornography, and admitted earning a total of as much as \$800,000 to \$1 million per year from his use of misleading domain names.

United States District Judge MICHAEL B. MUKASEY scheduled the sentencing for February 20, 2004.

ZUCCARINI faces a maximum sentence of 4 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine on each of 49 counts of using misleading domain names on the internet. In addition, ZUCCARINI pled guilty to one count of possessing child pornography which carries a maximum sentence of ten years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Mr. COMEY praised the investigative efforts of the United States Postal Inspection Service, the Federal Trade Commission's Bureau of Consumer Protection, Division of Marketing Practices, and the Department of Justice Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section.

Mr. COMEY said that the investigation is continuing.

Assistant United States Attorney JOSEPH V. De MARCO is in charge of the prosecution.